

had seen in detail, and asked why it was. The host replied, "At such and such a date, I was up in a tree to catch doves, when an eagle carrying a baby flew from the west and dropped it in the nest to be eaten by the young eagles. The baby screamed in fear, and the young eagles hesitated to peck at it. This is the girl whom I brought back from the nest and reared." The date of the accident and this story identified the girl as the lost child of the traveler. Crying bitterly, the traveler told the host the entire story of how an eagle had flown away with his baby daughter. When the host understood all the circumstances, he agreed to return the girl to her real parents.

Ah! This father happened to stay with the lost child's foster parents and finally regained his child. We surely know what sympathy Heaven⁸ had for them, and how deep the parent-child relation is. It is a miraculous event.

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On a Man's Rebirth as an Ox for Labor and Showing an Extraordinary Sign Because of Stealing from His Son¹

In the central village of Yamamura in Sou upper district, Yamato province 大和國添上郡山村,² there was once a man who was called Lord Kura no iegimi 椋家長.³ In the twelfth month he wanted to atone for his past sins by having a Mahayana scripture recited.⁴ Therefore he ordered his servant, "Go and call a monk."⁵ The servant asked,

7. 家iegimi; see 1.2, n. 5.

8. 天ten; although the Buddhist influence is not so strong in this story, it does show how intricately karma is interwoven and points out that, with the intervention of Heaven, miraculous interrelationships exist.

1. Cf. *Myōhōki* (III, On Wang 王, Yū 瑜, etc.), *Fusō ryakki* (IV, Saimei), *Konjaku monogatari* (XIV, 37). See II.15.

2. Present Obitoke, Nara-shi 奈良市帶解. According to the *Ryō no gige*, "Ko-ryō," Articles 1 and 2, a village, *sato* 里, consists of fifty households, but less in mountainous or remote areas; a great district 大郡 consists of from 16 to 20 villages; an upper district 上郡, from 12 to 15; a middle district 中郡, from 8 to 11; a lower district 下郡, from 4 to 7; a small district 小郡, from 2 to 3. An alternative reading is Sou no kami district. 村 *mura* is not legally defined, but consists of twenty houses or less.

3. Although *iegimi* 家長 is a common noun meaning "the head of the family," it is used here as a popular name; *kura* means "storehouse." See n. 10, below.

4. *Hōkō-kyō*; see Chap. II(1)a, n. 8.

5. *Zenji*; obviously it means "monk" in general.

"To which temple shall I go to find a monk?" The master answered, "I have no preference; you may invite any monk you happen to meet." Thereupon the servant brought home a monk whom he had met on the way, as he had been told. The master put faith⁶ in this monk and made offerings.⁷

In the evening when the monk was retiring after the service,⁸ the host⁹ made him a bed with quilts, and the monk was tempted to take the quilts rather than wait to receive offerings the next morning. Then he heard a voice saying, "Don't steal the quilts." Startled, the monk looked around and found only an ox standing under the eaves of the storehouse.¹⁰ When the monk approached the ox, it began to speak: "I am the father of Iegimi, the master of this house. In my previous life I stole ten sheaves¹¹ of rice belonging to my son in order to give them to others. Because of that, I was reborn in the form of an ox to make up for my evil deed. How dare you, who have entered the priesthood, steal the quilts? If you want to know whether or not my story is true, make a seat for me. I will come to lie on it so that you may know that I am the father of your host." The monk passed the night stricken with shame.

The next morning, after the service, he said to his host, "Have the other people withdraw." Then he summoned the host's family and told them the story he had heard the night before. The host went to the ox in grief and made a seat of straw, saying, "If you are my real father, will you take this seat?" And the ox knelt down and lay on the seat. All the relatives cried bitterly, and the host said that the ox was really his father. The host stood up and, with a bow, said to the ox, "I will cancel the accounts in your former life." At this the ox sighed and shed tears. The ox died at four o'clock that afternoon, whereupon the host presented the quilts and offerings to the monk and accumulated merits¹² for his deceased father.

We cannot but believe in the law of karmic causality.

6. 信心 *shinjin*, the mind to believe in the Three Treasures. See I.15, n. 7.

7. 供養 *kuyō*, a translation of Skt. *pūjā*, which means making offerings of food, clothes, incense, flowers, candles, etc., to the Three Treasures.

8. 禮經 *raikyō*, *rai* means worship and *kyō* means scripture recitation.

9. 檀越 *taniōchi*, sponsor of the service, one who makes offerings.

10. 倉下 *kura no moto*, which means literally "under the storehouse"; if it is a storehouse on stilts, the floor is several feet elevated from the ground, and it is possible for a man to take shelter under it. See Naoki Kōjirō, "Kura no moto no gogi ni tsuite," *Shoku Nihongi kenkyū*, VII (No. 7, July 1955), 178-181.

11. One sheaf yields about a quarter bushel of rice, according to the *Ryō no gige*, "Den-ryō," Article 1.

12. 功德 *kudoku*; see Chap. I(1)b, n. 50.